



The Shield

December 2021
Newsletter Vol. 5
29th Inf. Div.
TF Spartan

Gulf Gunnery 2021

U.S., Kuwaiti, and Saudi military forces together for first time in 30-years

*Story by Staff Sgt. Marc Heaton
Task Force Spartan Public Affairs*

CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait — Service members from the U.S., Kuwait, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia came together recently for Gulf Gunnery 2021, a two-week trilateral gunnery exercise between the Royal Saudi Land Forces (RSLF), Kuwaiti Land Forces (KLF), and U.S. forces held at Udairi Range Complex, Kuwait, Nov. 8-18.

Gulf Gunnery is a U.S. Army Central directed, Task Force Spartan led exercise designed to strengthen the relationships and increase interoperability between the three military forces. Both the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait are significant regional partners for the United States, and this exercise is just one way to enhance interaction and cooperation, while strengthening the partnerships between all three nations' forces.

"The main objectives of Gulf Gunnery 2021 were to achieve interoperability between the three nations, conduct a trilateral gunnery exercise, strengthen military-to-military relationships, and to promote the message to our adversaries that our regional partnership is

strong," said Maj. Matthew Wessler, Task Force Spartan's Kuwait Partner Nation Team deputy.

The exercise began with crew-level training on individual vehicles to include M1 Abrams tanks from both the KLF and the U.S. Army's 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 194th Armor Regiment, as well as Bradley Fighting Vehicles from the RSLF. It then progressed to platoon-level training including live-fire tables and internal skill evaluations conducted by each platoon.



The training culminated with a combined company-level gunnery demonstration with platoons from each nation participating. The combined gunnery demonstration required its own high level of coordination between the three nations. The complex demonstration included High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS), M1 Abrams tanks, Bradley Fighting Vehicles, AH-64 Apache helicopters, a dismounted ground assault, and paratroopers all operating within the same battle-space.

"These soldiers came together and learned how to communicate, both with simple words and also operational graphics. When they got inside the tank or Bradley, they

See "GUNNERY," page 4

What's Inside



From the Top

Brig. Gen. Joseph Anthony DiNonno
Task Force Spartan | 29 ID
Assistant Division Commander
for Operations



The Shield

TASK FORCE SPARTAN



Commanding General
Maj. Gen. John Rhodes

Command Sergeant Major
Command Sgt. Maj. Daryl Plude

Public Affairs Officer
Maj. Scott Drugo

Deputy Public Affairs Officer
Capt. Tim Savidge

Division Public Affairs Team

Master Sgt. Brock Jones
Staff Sgt. Matt Lyman
Staff Sgt. Marc Heaton
Sgt. Marc Loi

318-480-7900
Camp Arifjan, Kuwait
APO AE 09306

The Shield is an authorized publication for members of the Department of Defense. Contents herein are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by the U.S. Government or the Department of the Army. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the PA Officer.

Got a Tip?

At The Shield, we are always looking for more content that highlights Task Force Spartan and 29th ID Soldiers. Do you have photos you think we should feature here or in our yearbook? Send them to us with a few sentences of basic information. We'll give you credit!

We're on Social Media!

Want to read more about what the 29th is doing? Scan this QR code to check us out on Facebook and Twitter @TFSpartan and @29thID.



As the Thanksgiving & Christmas Holidays approach, I want to take a moment to recognize some of the incredible efforts and contributions that resonate with those who share the Army culture and especially our 29ers and families.

Life continues in the homes and communities where we left our loved ones last May. Birthday parties, first steps, soccer tournaments, school plays, and Sunday dinners at Mom's house continue without you. This is often harder on our families than it is for the deployed Soldier. This year is a culmination of support by our families that began much earlier and continues throughout our service in the Army. I want to extend a special thank you to our families and encourage everyone to take extra time in expressing appreciation to your loved ones early and often. 2021 was dubbed the "Year of the National Guard" because of the number of high-level missions National Guard Soldiers took part in. I'll add that it was also the "Year of the National Guard Family," because being a family member is, indeed, one of the toughest jobs in the military.

Thanks to our veterans, many of whom paid with their lives to protect the principles our nation stands for. A more perfect union. Be proud that everyone who wears this uniform is a member of something much larger than themselves. This generation, no less than The Greatest Generation, is prepared to answer the call to defend universal ideals of free people that is not universally recognized or enjoyed. The 29th has a particularly rich history including heroic efforts on June 6, 1944 on the beaches of Normandy during World War II. At Camp Arifjan there are pictures of some of those heroes, whose actions are a constant reminder of the sacrifice Soldiers make. Major Thomas Howie exemplified the bravery of the Soldiers of the Blue-and-Gray when tasked to liberate Saint Lo, a French town of strategic importance. His exclamation "See you in Saint Lo" inspired members of the 29th before he was killed by an enemy mortar. Inspired by his leadership, Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, pushed into Saint Lo, thereby securing a foothold for the eventual Allied victory.

Lastly, to 29th ID Soldiers, I am proud to work alongside you. Wherever you are in the CENTCOM AOR, your tireless efforts are creating stronger partnerships and stability for an entire region, laying the foundation for new and innovative training, and helping partner nations secure a brighter future. What you do here matters. It will matter long after you return home. Think about that as you prepare each day, and be proud that future 29ers will reference this deployment when history recounts the evacuation in Afghanistan, training exercises that brought countries together, and efforts that countered malign attacks designed to destroy instead of build consensus and peace.

Stay focused on the mission, and take care of each other. No matter where in this theater of operation you find yourself, I hope you will respond with your own version of "See you in Saint Lo," when the Nation needs you most. 🇺🇸

29th ID Soldiers who served in Kosovo serve together again in Kuwait



Story by Maj. Scott Drugo **Task Force Spartan Public Affairs**

It was just over 15 years ago that 12 Soldiers who are presently deployed with the 29th Infantry Division as Task Force Spartan were part of a brigade-sized element that assumed the duties of Task Force Falcon, Kosovo Force 8 (KFOR8), Multinational Task Force-East (MNTF-E), based at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo.

These Soldiers were deployed to Kosovo to provide a safe and secure environment where both Albanians and Serbians could live while the United Nations administered the mostly Albanian province after a NATO bombing campaign expelled Serbian forces in 1999. Task Force Falcon was made up of 1,500 National Guard Soldiers mostly from Virginia and Massachusetts, with smaller elements from 20 other states and Puerto Rico.

The majority of the MNTF-E was made up of infantry Soldiers who did 24-hour operations in the area. The infantry patrolled everything from the large towns to back country roads and

mountain trails. There were also eight small liaison and monitoring teams made up of six to 10 Soldiers. Their job was to interact with everyone from local officials to citizens and migrant workers to gather their concerns and report those concerns to the higher headquarters in Pristina, Kosovo. As with any Army organization, there was a large support organization that was comprised of both Soldiers and a native workforce that worked on Camp Bondsteel.

With careers that span more than 15 years, these 12 Soldiers naturally have moved up in rank and taken on higher responsibilities.

"I was the Task Force Red Dragon supply noncommissioned officer in charge and putting my warrant officer packet together," recalls Chief Warrant Officer 4 Douglas Harris. "I requested an endorsement letter from the 29th Inf. Div. senior property book officer, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Raymond Bowles, and he asked me what my goal was. I told him that I wanted to have his job one day. Here we are years later, and

I am now the 29th senior property book officer. I tip my hat to Chief Ray Bowles and thank him for his support."

Being the only U.S. Army representatives in the area and sharing the same camp led to a tight-knit group. "We had a softball team named The Average Joes which included division Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Jenks and our 60 year-old chaplain, Lt. Col. William Leone," said Master Sgt. Brad Staggs. "We had a perfect record of 0-20 which made every team afraid to play us because they didn't want to be the first to lose to us. I think the average age of the team was in the mid-upper 40s."

It was during the KFOR8 rotation that a decision to make Kosovo an independent state from Serbia was scheduled to take place. In other areas of Kosovo, the delayed decisions led Albanian Kosovars—demanding independence—to demonstrate civil unrest, but in the MNTF-E area of operations things were civil. The decisions to make Kosovo independent continued to be delayed, and the 29th Inf. Div. was no longer in Kosovo when those decisions were eventually made.

This coming January, the Virginia National Guard's Staunton-based 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team headquarters will mobilize to take over a similar mission at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo. 🌐

Front row, left to right: Chief Warrant Officer 4 Doug Harris, Lt. Col. Mike Silberman, Sgt. Maj. Harold Murdock, and Sgt. Maj. Michael Mattocks. Back row, left to right: Sgt. Maj. Joel Fix, Master Sgt. Brad Staggs, Sgt. First Class Marcus Bailey, and Maj. Scott Drugo.

from "Gunnery," page 1

understood each other's jobs. They learned different tactics, techniques, and procedures from each other. It was absolutely wonderful to see and be a part of," said Col. Stephan Ruppel-Lee, Task Force Spartan chief of operations.

With any exercise of this scope, months of planning and preparations were necessary to make it a success. Even facing challenges, such as language barriers and different procedures, it was an opportunity to learn from each other and was a rewarding experience for all involved.

"There is the obvious success from the military standpoint in that three different countries came together and trained in a joint environment in order to better understand the others' operational capabilities," said Wessler. "I think another just as equal success was the personal connections that were made between countries. Whether at a lunch or dinner function with them or out on the ranges, I witnessed soldiers from all sides training and interacting together as if they were all in the same unit."

While the U.S. has had long-standing partnerships with both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, this exercise marked the first time in over 30-years that all three nations came together, having not done so since the 1991 Gulf War.

"Gulf Gunnery demonstrated the capacity and capability to conduct trilateral, combined arms maneuver between Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and U.S. Army forces," said Maj. Gen. John Rhodes, commanding general, Task Force Spartan. "Being a veteran of the 1991 Gulf War, it was very special to witness the same warrior spirit from the same partner comrades 30 years later." 🌐



Top: Kuwaiti tanks wait on the firing line at Udairi Range 9, Nov. 18, 2021. Above: U.S., Kuwaiti and Saudi Soldiers and leaders pose for a group photo following the Gulf Gunnery opening ceremony, Nov. 8, 2021.



Gulf Gunnery



Clockwise from top left: Kuwait Land Force (KLF) High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) fire during the Gulf Gunnery culminating event, Nov. 18; U.S., Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia national flags blow in the breeze at Udairi Range, Nov. 14; Kuwaiti Apache helicopters maneuver above Range 9, Nov. 18; A Royal Saudi Land Forces (RSLF) Soldier places ammo on the ramp of a Bradley Fighting Vehicle, Nov. 14; U.S. Soldiers are given a tour of an Abrams Tank belonging to 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 194th Armor Regiment, at Udairi Range, Nov. 17; Saudi Soldiers stand below flags they raised during the Gulf Gunnery culminating exercise, Nov. 18; Maj. Gen. John Rhodes and Command Sgt. Maj. Daryl Plude pose for a photo with KLF Brig. Gen. Khaled A. Al-Shualah (left), and RSLF Col. Naif Alhumaidi Al-Otaibi (center); KLF Abrams Tanks send rounds downrange, Nov. 18; Kuwaiti Soldiers pull tank ammo from a supply truck to load into their tank, Nov. 14. Saudi Bradleys and American tanks share the firing line during the culminating live-fire event of Gulf Gunnery, Nov. 18.



Task Force Spartan Soldier gives back to USO during her time off

Story by Sgt. Marc Loi

Task Force Spartan Public Affairs

When Maj. Karolyn Braun, a health service materiel officer currently deployed with the 29th Infantry Division in support of Operation Spartan Shield, isn't busy acquiring medical supplies to support Soldiers' physical well-being, she volunteers at the Camp Arifjan United Service Organization to support Soldiers' mental well-being.

A member of the Wyoming National Guard who volunteered to deploy with the Virginia-based 29th Infantry Division, Braun came to the unit during mobilization not knowing anyone. Yet, from the beginning, Braun built a foundation of trust to ensure Soldiers knew who she was and that they could come talk to her for any reason.

Shortly after she arrived in Kuwait, Braun looked for more opportunities to connect with Soldiers, and she decided on the USO because she wanted to give back to an organization she often uses during her travels, she said.

"For me, it is a way to give back because this is a place for them to relax and unwind," she said. "I've always liked to be around and care for young Soldiers."

Part of keeping an eye on Soldiers is knowing when they

need to talk. Recently, Braun noticed that a Soldier looked like he had a lot on his mind, so she decided to engage him.

"He had just gotten here, he was not in a good place," Braun said. "So, we sat for about 45 minutes, and just chatted as I got to know him. When we talked it out, he gave me a hug and left. To me, that's part of being a leader, knowing your Soldiers, helping with the issues so they get better."

For Braun, the emotional intelligence of knowing when a Soldier might need to talk is crucial for both the Soldiers and the military because the success of one depends on the other.

"Without emotional intelligence, you aren't getting the best out of Soldiers. They have to be emotionally and mentally sound to be at the right place," she said. "Our job is to make sure Soldiers to our left and right are able to complete their mission."

Whereas talking to Soldiers can help them be more at ease and stay mission-ready, Braun doesn't limit her volunteer work to just seeking out Soldiers. Among the things she does during her volunteer hours include sweeping and cleaning the spaces Soldiers frequent, as well as organizing books and postcards. The work may not be glamorous, but to Braun, it is an important part of volunteering.

"It's not all fun and games, but in the end, it makes life better for Soldiers here, and that's what it's all about," she said. 🌐



Camp Arifjan



Left: Maj. Karolyn Braun smiles while talking to Soldiers outside the Camp Arifjan USO who had come for one of the many events sponsored by the USO.

Veterans Day Around TF Spartan





◀*Opposite page:* Upper left: Participants in the Camp Arifjan Veterans Day 5K wait to begin the race. Upper right: The crowd at the Area Support Group-Kuwait Veterans Day ceremony stands at attention during the Armed Forces Medley. Middle: 29th Infantry Division Soldiers pose for a group photo prior to the 5K on Camp Arifjan. Bottom left: A group of Virginia Military Institute alumni stand for a photo in front of the U.S. Army Central headquarters on Camp Arifjan, Nov. 11. Bottom right: A Task Force Liberty Soldier hustles toward the finish of the Veterans Day ruck march at Camp As Sayliyah, Qatar.

▼*This page, top left:* A Task Force Liberty Soldier carries the American flag during a Veterans Day run at Camp As Sayliyah (CAS), Qatar. Top right: Sgt. Maj. Lee Russell, senior enlisted advisor for Task Force Liberty, smiles while waiting for the CAS 5K to begin. Middle: Soldiers assigned to Task Force Liberty in Qatar pose for a photo following the Veterans Day 5K run at CAS, Qatar. Bottom right: Veterans Day sunrise over Camp Arifjan Kuwait.



The Relationship Between Contentment, Thanksgiving, Joy and Peace

**Story by CH (Lt. Col) Jeffrey Hicks
Task Force Spartan & 29ID Chaplain**

We may call it different things, but the key to being thankful is being content. We may refer to it as expectation management, not being overconfident, or being content with what we have been blessed with rather than focusing on what we do not have. This attitude of contentment also produces joy and peace that nothing or no one can destroy nor steal from us.

One of the most profound statements in Scripture was made by St. Paul who said, “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation” (Philippians 4:12) and “I can do all this through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13). First, Paul is not talking about complacency, for there was nothing complacent about

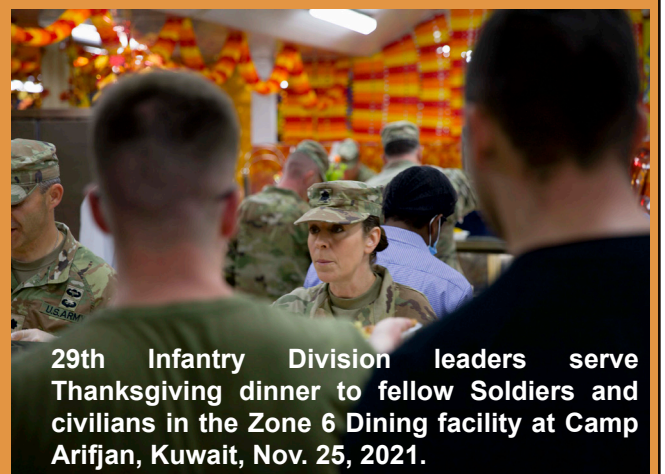
St. Paul. He was not content just existing, only getting by, or of leaving the gospel without proclamation witness. Second, Paul is describing something he has learned through the situations he experienced in his own life. The phrase “I have learned” that Paul used twice in verses 11-12 refers to what has been learned through his life experiences. Paul emphatically declared, “hope does not disappoint” (Romans 5:5). Third, Paul could speak of contentment because God had transformed him, giving him a solid foundation and formation within. Because he experienced the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, etc.—Paul had peace, contentment, joy and thanksgiving (Galatians 5:22-23). Fourth, Paul knew he could endure and persevere with thanksgiving regardless of wherever and in whatever circumstances he

found himself.

Leading worship and attending services on Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day has been a priority and practice in my faith tradition. This may not be possible for most of us, but I encourage you wherever you are and whatever you are doing to follow the tenets of your faith, the dictates of your conscience, and the convictions of your heart in order to spend time in reflection, prayer, and thanksgiving during this holiday season. Practice an attitude of gratitude and make a list of the people, places, experiences, and things you are thankful for. Then, take the time to express your thoughts to God and one another. Please remember to pay gratitude, thanksgiving, and generosity forward whenever possible...have a joyous Holiday Season! 🌟



Happy Thanksgiving!



29th Infantry Division leaders serve Thanksgiving dinner to fellow Soldiers and civilians in the Zone 6 Dining facility at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, Nov. 25, 2021.

29th ID Hosts Norwegian Foot March



Norwegian Foot March lead organizer, Capt. Michael Boyd (right), Headquarters Support Company commander, works the check-in table with help from other 29th Inf. Div. Soldiers.



Story by Maj. Scott Drugo Task Force Spartan Public Affairs

29th Infantry Division and Task Force Spartan Soldiers organized and conducted a Norwegian Foot March Nov. 13, 2021, at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

Started in 1915, the Norwegian Foot March consists of an 18.6 mile ruck march with a 25-pound ruck sack. To earn the Norwegian Foot March skill badge, participants must finish within a predetermined time based on age and gender—most Soldiers being given just four hours and 30 minutes to finish, averaging roughly 14:31 per mile. Depending on the how fast the march is completed, finishers can earn a bronze, silver or gold badge that can be worn on their service uniform.



"The Norwegian Foot March was tough and demanding, but I'm really glad that I completed it. It required preparation and training, but it was all worth it when I crossed the finish line!", said Staff Sgt. Brandon Watkins, Operations NCO for the 29th's Training and Exercise Section.

More than 450 service members, including many from allied nations, attempted the challenge. Several more 29th Soldiers assisted in the event by weighing ruck sacks and providing logistical support. 🌐

Center: Foot March participants run during the course to keep their desired pace. Left: Capt. Nicholas Rivera, an intelligence officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, oversees the rucksack weigh-in process